



# College/Seminary Focus Area Plan

July 2007



## Introduction

In mid-2006, the College/Seminary Focus Area was selected as one of two neighborhoods in which the City would work to create a five-year plan for neighborhood improvements. Selection was based on anticipated impacts of major projects in the area, primarily construction of a new Morgan Street bridge and demolition of the Rockford Housing Authority's Jane Addams development. While not as clearly defined as a final product, the proposed whitewater park in the City-owned Ingersoll property south of Walnut Street also has the potential to generate a significant impact on this area in the long run, especially if South Madison Street is extended to connect with Seminary Street as has been discussed.



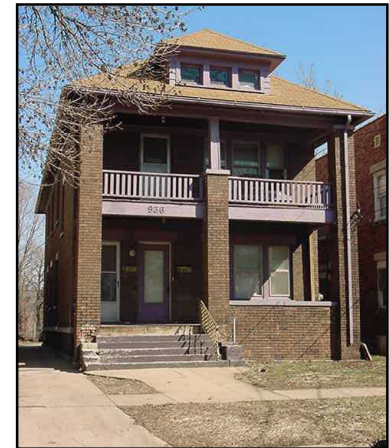
membership of the two groups. However, each task force met independently starting in December 2006.



The process began with the appointment of a Task Force with representation from several organizations involved in the neighborhood. These include ORCHiD, a very active neighborhood organization in the area; the Rockford School District; Rockford Park District; the Rockford Housing Authority; Winnebago County Health Department; and Joseph Behr and Sons.

The first two Task Force meetings were actually joint meetings with a similar task force set up to prepare a neighborhood plan for the HOPE VI/Concord Commons area on the City's west side. The joint meeting approach was used because of the significant overlap in

The College/Seminary Task Force did not prepare this plan in a vacuum. While initial work involved standard planning practices of reviewing current conditions (demographics, crime data, and the physical condition of public improvements and of structures in the neighborhood), it also involved a concerted effort to learn what residents of the area wanted. Input from the neighborhood was obtained through a variety of means – regular ORCHiD meetings, through attendance by some residents of Task Force meetings, and through a neighborhood survey. Once this was done, the Task Force got down to the business of outlining specific issues and assets of the College/Seminary area and then deriving an action plan. The end result of this stage of the process is this document – a five-year action plan for making College/Seminary a stronger, healthier neighborhood. However, the real end result will come through implementation of the actions proposed in this plan. This will require the joint efforts of all those who have been involved in creation of the plan.



## Development of the College/Seminary Focus Area



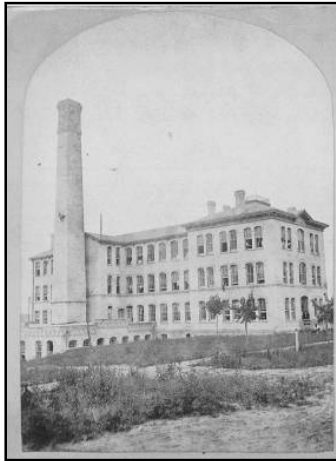
The College/Seminary Focus Area includes some of Rockford's oldest development. The 1858 map of the City shown here shows a small subdivision along what is now College Avenue (then East Seminary Street) between Seminary and Kishwaukee Streets. It also shows Rockford Female Seminary (later Rockford College) already in place on the south side of what is now Division Street (then South Street).

Rockford Female Seminary was founded in 1844 by Rev. Aratus Kent, brother of Germanicus Kent. Rev. Kent became the first president of the Board of Trustees of both the Seminary and of Beloit Men's College. The Seminary received its charter in 1847 and held its first classes in a converted horse barn on North First Street. Construction started on the 8-acre campus along the Rock River in 1852. The Seminary's most illustrious graduate, Jane Addams, started classes here in 1877.



In its very earliest years, virtually all development in the neighborhood was residential with the exception of the Female Seminary. The 1858 and 1871 maps show small-lot development in the triangle formed by Division, Ford and South First Streets and in the small area lying between College Avenue and Catlin Street. The rest of the area south of the railroad was either fairly large lots, or estates, or vacant land. The portion of the focus area lying north of the tracks was subdivided into small, probably residential lots with the exception of land right along the river from Grove Street south. This was reserved for water power purposes.

In looking at Sanborn maps, we can see how the area developed over time. The earliest one, from 1897, shows fairly solid residential development from the tracks south to Gregory Street. The only exceptions in this part of the area would be the Seminary, Kishwaukee School (not the current structure but in the same location) and a washing machine factory behind a residence on Catlin Street between South Third and Kishwaukee Streets. The triangle formed by the tracks, South First Street and the river contained two significant industrial uses, the J. G. Chick Milling Company and the Rockford General Electric Company. The area north of the tracks and west of Madison Street included W. F. & John Barnes Company, the Ward Pump Company, the Rockford Watch Factory, and a coal and lumber yard for Rockford Lumber & Fuel Company as well as Rockford's Central High School.



The 1913 Sanborn shows the same basic development pattern with a couple of added blocks of residential lots south of Penfield. W. F. & John Barnes covers more area than it did on the 1897 map, taking over what had been a residential property at Walnut and Water Streets. Rockford Female Seminary has changed to Rockford College.

By 1956, development has extended throughout the focus area. Starting with the area north of the tracks, W. F. & John Barnes has expanded to include virtually all of this part of the focus area, the sole exceptions being a remaining coal yard along the northbound tracks and the administration building for School District 205. South of the tracks, the predominant use remains residential with the exception of Rockford College's campus, Kishwaukee School, some scattered commercial uses along Kishwaukee Street, the United Lumber Company on Seminary Street just north of Keith Creek, and a bus garage for the Peoria-Rockford Bus Company on Seminary Street.

Current land use shows some significant changes have taken place in the last 50 years. While many of the industrial structures remain north of the track, they are no longer used as a major manufacturing facility. Part is now owned by the City of Rockford, part by a private owner, and part has been demolished. The triangle of land that was the site of the Rockford General Electric Company in 1897 is now owned by ComEd and is virtually vacant. Virtually all of the buildings of Rockford College are gone, replaced by the Jane Addams development and Brewington Oaks highrise of the Rockford Housing Authority and by a small commercial strip center. There is a second commercial strip on Kishwaukee Street between College Avenue and Union Street. Major industrial uses – Joseph Behr & Sons and Rockford Auto Parts – have taken a large part of the south end of the focus area, along with Nelson Park. The rest of the neighborhood remains residential in nature, much of it with homes that are 75 to 100 years old.

## Description and Analysis

### Population

Demographics in the College/Seminary Focus Area will change dramatically by the end of 2007 with the demolition of the Rockford Housing Authority's Jane Addams development. Unfortunately, there is no truly accurate way to separate Census data for residents of this development from that for the rest of the neighborhood. However, some basic changes can be deduced from census block data.

- ♦ **Total Population** The College/Seminary neighborhood grew at about half the rate of the City as a whole between 1990 and 2000. While Rockford grew by about 10,000 people (or 7.2%), the neighborhood grew by 175 people (3.6%). It is anticipated that it will lose roughly 250 residents with the demolition of the Jane Addams development.
- ♦ **Age Breakdown** As can be seen from the table to the right, all age groups increased in College/Seminary except for the youngest and oldest. In contrast, the City of Rockford showed a slight increase in the number of children under 5 as well as in the number of those age 65 and over. Put another way, nearly  $\frac{3}{4}$  (74.1%) of the neighborhood's population in 2000 was under the age of 45 while just  $\frac{2}{3}$  (65.5%) of the City's total population fell within that range. However, this will change with the loss of the Jane Addams development. The greatest change is in children under the age of 15 – just over 22% of them lived in Jane Addams. The population over the age of 65, however, is virtually unchanged, going from 146 to 143.
- ♦ **Ethnicity** Composition of the neighborhood's population changed substantially during the '90s with minority population growing from 33.8% of the population in 1990 to nearly half – 46.8% – in 2000. During the same time period, the City's minority population grew from 18.9% in 1990 to 27.2% in 2000. This trend sees a slight reversal with the loss of the Jane Addams development. Without its residents, minority population within the Focus Area drops to about 42%. The most significant change resulting from loss of the development lies with the African-American population which dropped by 25%, thereby dropping from 31% of the total population to 26% of the total.
- ♦ **Households & Families** Of the 883 households in College/Seminary in 2000, 45% were families and 30% were families with children under 18 (just one percentage point less than the citywide figure of 31%). Of the families with children, 62% were single-parent families compared with 30% citywide. Of these, 81% were female-headed households. Total households declined by 8% with the loss of Jane Addams while the number of families dropped by 16%.

Population of College/Seminary

	1990	2000 A*	2000 B*
Total	2,100	2,175	1,914
Under age 5	245	208	154
Ages 5 to 17	416	490	391
Ages 18 to 44	862	914	824
Ages 45 to 64	321	417	402
Ages 65 and up	256	146	143
White	1,391	1,158	1,109
African-Amer.	521	680	504
Asian	116	98	91
Multiple races	--	79	73
Hispanic	--	374	353

2000 A = entire Focus Area; 2000 B = Focus Area minus population in Jane Addams

- ♦ **Income** Median household income in the neighborhood was \$16,935, less than half the citywide median of \$37,667. This figure is about \$1,000 lower than the citywide median for 1980. Nearly 38% of the residents of this neighborhood fell below the poverty line in 2000, compared with 14% citywide. Over twice as many households (10.6% vs. 4.5%) received public assistance here as in the Rockford as a whole while a somewhat lower percentage (22.5 vs. 27.1) received income from Social Security.
- ♦ **Educational Attainment** Roughly 41% of Focus Area residents over 25 did not graduate from high school, compared with 22% citywide. Only 8.7% received a college degree, compared with nearly 20% citywide.
- ♦ **Employment** The unemployment rate in this area was 19.5% in 2000, compared to 4.5% citywide.

## Housing



♦ **Ownership** Nearly 80% of all households are rental, compared to 39% citywide. This is in part a reflection of the RHA's Jane Addams and Brewington Oaks developments within the Focus Area. These percentages do not change significantly with the demolition of Jane Addams.

♦ **Vacancy Rate** The area's vacancy rate increased slightly between 1990 and 2000, going from 20.5% to 22.6%. (Equivalent citywide figures were 5.7% and 6.9%.)

♦ **Housing Condition** In a windshield survey done by City staff at the start of the planning process, found only 16.5% of

the 243 structures to be in good condition. Over  $\frac{3}{4}$  – 77.8% – were found to be in deteriorated condition, i.e., needing minor repairs and/or cleanup. The remaining units were either vacant (17.3%), boarded up (6.2%) or considered dilapidated (5.8%) and needing major rehabilitation.

- ♦ **Age of Housing** Based on the 2000 Census, all but 10 housing units within the area were built before 1980, with the median year for construction being 1946. The significance of this number derives from the fact that lead paint was not banned from use in homes until 1978. Consequently, it can be assumed that virtually every home in the area has had lead paint in it, and that many still do. (Citywide, 83% of housing units were built before 1980, so this is not an uncommon problem in Rockford.)
- ♦ **Housing Costs** Although housing costs are low in this area, they still represent a large percentage of household income in many cases. Median rent in 2000 was \$306 compared to \$498 citywide. Roughly a third of renters – 32% – pay 30% or more of their income for housing, slightly lower than the citywide figure of 34.4%. The presence of so many subsidized housing units in the area no doubt plays a significant role in this percentage not being higher. Homeowners do not fare quite as well with 37% paying 30% or more of their income for housing, compared to 19% citywide.



### Housing in the College/Seminary Focus Area

	1990	2000 A*	2000 B*
Total households	886	883	809
Owner-occupied	158	179	170
Renter-occupied	728	709	644
Median value		\$55,024	
Median rent		\$306	

\*2000 A = entire Focus Area;

\*2000 B = Focus Area minus Jane Addams development

## Land Use & Zoning

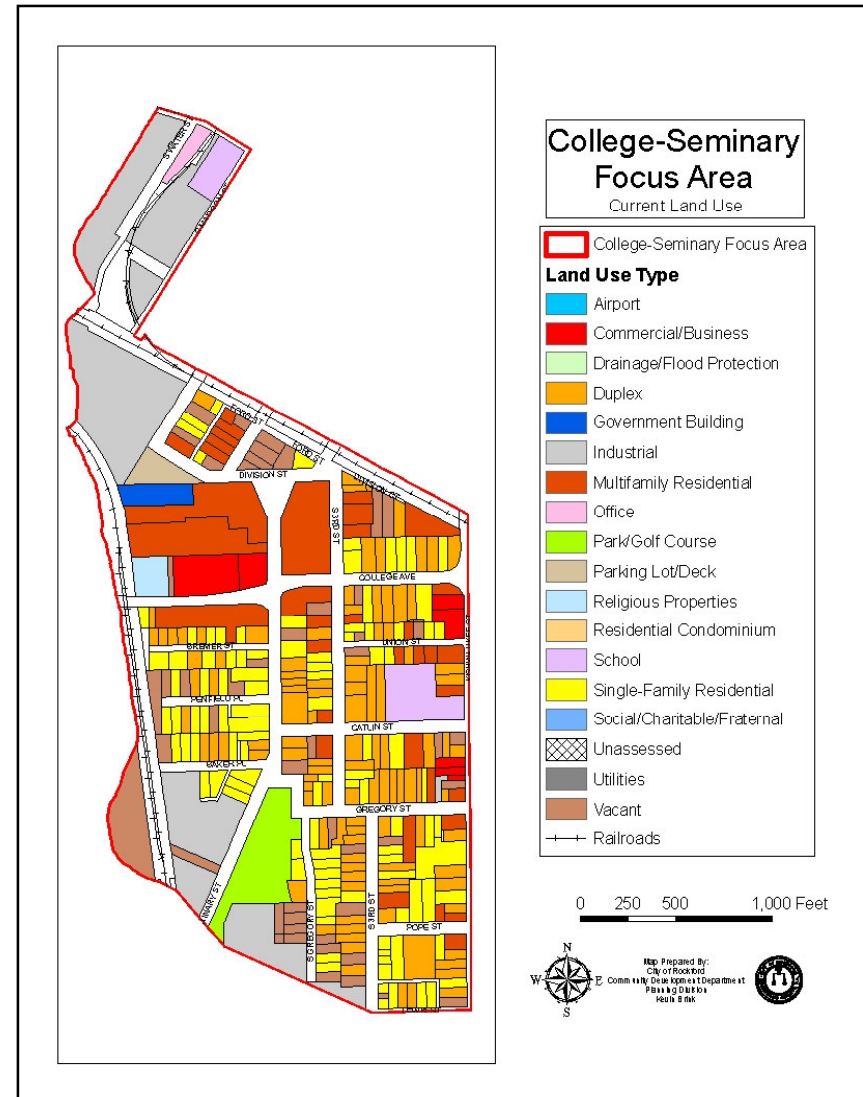
While the bulk of the College/Seminary area is residential, there are some significant exceptions to this. The most obvious are at the two ends of the area included here, both of which contain either current or former industrial properties. To the north, the area lying between the railroad and Walnut Street includes the former Ingersoll plant, now largely vacant and owned by the City of Rockford, as well as other structures still in industrial use and the Meyer Material cement plant. This part of the area also includes the administration building of the Rockford School District. The land between Water and Madison Streets south of Walnut Street is zoned I1 Light Industrial while the remaining area is zoned C4 Commercial Oldtown in anticipation of redevelopment.

A second major industrial area lies at the south end of the Focus Area. This includes Joseph Behr & Sons and Rockford Auto Supply, both of which have a significant impact on the surrounding area. Zoning for these uses is divided between I1 and I2, a heavier industrial category. Both uses are well established and provide a good employment base in the area. As can be seen below on page \_\_, Behr plans on making substantial improvements to their site and, perhaps more importantly, access to it.

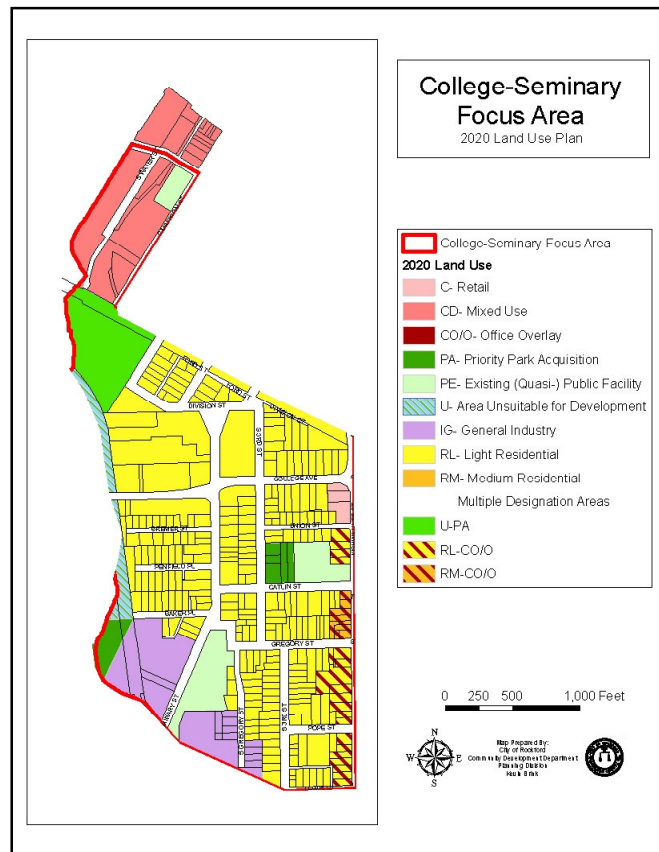
A third non-residential, sort of industrial area lies in the triangular area south of the railroad and west of South First Street. Owned by ComEd, it is largely vacant land now but at one time included a power plant.

Commercial uses in the Focus Area are generally limited to the Campus Towers shopping area at College Avenue and Seminary Street and to Kishwaukee Street between College Avenue and Union Street. Haas Towing is located further south on Kishwaukee between Catlin and Gregory Streets. While this location is zoned C3 for heavy commercial use, the other two are zoned C2 for standard retail operations.

The two public uses in the Focus Area are Kishwaukee School on Catlin Street and Nelson Park on Seminary Street. While there has been a school at this location for over 100 years, the existing structure was built in 1922.



Most of the rest of College/Seminary is used for residential purposes. However, a major change is about to take place with the demolition of the Rockford Housing Authority's Jane Addams development in 2007. The portion of the development lying south of College Avenue will be incorporated into the expanded right-of-way for the new approach to the new Morgan Street bridge when it is built, possibly in 2011. Plans for the rest of the site are to use it as open parkland, at least in the short term. The other part of the RHA property here, the Brewington Oaks highrises, will return to its original use, that of housing for seniors and disabled individuals.



Rockford's 2020 Plan, shown to the left, reflects the changes that College/Seminary now faces. As can be seen on the map, the area north of the railroad is planned for mixed use and the ComEd site for park acquisition. This would allow development of a whitewater park and/or incorporation of this area into a Riverwalk system. Existing industrial uses to the south – primarily Joseph Behr and Rockford Auto Parts – are retained as is the commercial use on Kishwaukee south of College Avenue. Major changes in the residential area are lower densities where Jane Addams is located, a new park next to Kishwaukee School, and potential office uses along Kishwaukee Street using existing structures.

## Public Improvements

As is the case in any older neighborhood, the condition of various elements of infrastructure – streets, sidewalks, curbs, gutters – varies widely. In this case, street pavement condition ranges from very poor (South Water Street, Grove Street, the 400 block of Ford Street, Division Court, and a block of Gregory Street) to very good (Union Street, Catlin Street, Pope Street, and parts of Gregory Street and College Avenue). The optimal goal is to have every block in good condition; the goal for the five years of this plan is to improve \_\_ blocks of pavement each year. Actual projects to be carried out each year will be determined by priorities of the two aldermen representing the area.

The most significant capital improvement to be made in the Focus Area will be replacement of the Morgan Street bridge. This will include reconstruction of College Avenue from the river to Kishwaukee Street, increasing it to four lanes from the river to Seminary Street and to three lanes from Seminary to Kishwaukee Street. The bridge itself

will be a tied arch main span as shown in the illustration here with sidewalks on both the north and south sides, ornamental lighting and railing and other amenities. It is designed to serve not only as a functional bridge, but also as a gateway to College/Seminary and to the South Main business district on the west side of the bridge. Construction may not occur until 2011, however.



Engineering work and land acquisition have already begun on another, albeit smaller, bridge project. This will result in construction of a new bridge on Kishwaukee Street over Keith Creek. Construction is anticipated to be done in 2008.

## **Parks and Open Space**

There is only one existing park within the Focus Area, Nelson Park on Seminary Street. It contains basic amenities – a ball diamond, playground and a basketball court. However, three major projects are planned that may have a significant impact on the area. First is development of a whitewater park and related uses north of the railroad along the riverfront. As part of this project, and continuing along the riverfront in both directions, would be the RiverWalk. Finally, both the Rockford Park District and the City of Rockford have discussed creation of a Keith Creek Greenway that will ultimately extend from the Rock River through the Focus Area and eastward to Alpine Park. Each of these projects is designed to meet multiple objectives.

No final plans for the whitewater park have been developed and approved yet; however, most discussions center on creating the park on the City-owned Ingersoll property south of Walnut Street and extending southward, incorporating property currently owned by ComEd. The impact of the park's development could extend well into the Focus Area, beyond the portion north of the railroad. In time, it could generate a substantial amount of new mixed use development, combining retail, restaurants, and residential.

More definitive plans for the downtown portion of the RiverWalk are currently underway. However, the ultimate goal is to extend at least a pathway system as far south as the Chicago Rockford International Airport. This is reflected in both the City's *2020 Plan* and in the Rockford Transportation Study's draft *Bicycle and Pedestrian Study*, just released in May 2007. Timing for extending a pathway of any sort past College Avenue will depend on a number of other factors, primarily how and when the whitewater park develops, construction of the Morgan Street bridge, and progress on creating the Keith Creek Greenway.

The Greenway was originally envisioned as a multipurpose greenway corridor centering on Keith Creek and extending from the Rock River at the south end of the Focus Area eastward to Alpine Park. Project goals range from increased stormwater capacity – bearing in mind that it was Keith Creek that flooded on Labor Day 2006 – to passive recreational and green space areas to active recreation facilities, including pathways. Because of the extent of the overall project - 3½ miles from the Rock River to Alpine Park – and the intense level of development of many portions of it, completion of the entire Greenway project will undoubtedly take many years. However, the section from the river to 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue Park on the east side of Kishwaukee Street may be among the first parts to be done.

## **Historic Preservation and Urban Design**

Historic preservation is important not only in retaining the physical evidence of the history and individual character of Rockford, but also as a tool in maintaining the viability of older neighborhoods such as the College/Seminary area. In at least one case – Haight Village – historic district designation at the local level played a key role in bringing a neighborhood back from one verging on blight to one that is stable. The greater stability is reflected in increased assessed valuations, going up by 154% since 1977. What had been an equivalent neighborhood in 1977 just east of Kishwaukee Street rose by only 44% in the same period.

In light of the fact that most of the structures in College/Seminary, other than Housing Authority properties, were built before 1950, and in light of the neighborhood's rich history as the original home of what is now Rockford College, historic preservation can play a role in maintaining the character of this neighborhood. To that end, City staff photographed all existing structures in College/Seminary. Working from these photos, the Rockford Historic Preservation Commission evaluated each one on its historic merit. Of the 229 buildings evaluated, the Commission determined that 83% had some level of historic merit. Nearly 60% were deemed to be either of landmark quality or good enough to be considered a contributing structure in a historic district if one existed; the remaining 28% were of more marginal quality because of their loss of architectural integrity, but would at least not be considered intrusions in a historic district. Indeed, many of these more marginal structures could be contributing to a historic district if they were renovated in an appropriate manner.

In neighborhoods such as this one that are completely built up, the most important factors of design relate to infill construction. The goal of any infill construction should be to ensure as much as possible that new construction respects the scale and character of the surrounding buildings. New construction need not look like the older buildings around it, but it should have similar setbacks, lot size, height and mass. This will be especially critical as the Housing Authority and the City plan for the future use of the land where the Jane Addams development is located.

Another facet of design is to promote crime prevention through environmental design. For example, design of the proposed Keith Creek Greenway should take into account the need for public safety personnel to be able to get to and from the Greenway easily. Similarly, building design and layout can affect the safety of individuals entering and leaving the buildings. The Rockford Police Department can aid property owners in making their buildings look discouraging to a criminal rather than inviting.

## Plans of organizations within the Focus Area

---

- ♦ **ORCHiD** has the same boundaries as the Focus Area except for the finger extending north of the railroad to include the Ingersoll site. They already have a strategic plan that calls for improving streets and lighting, and adding hanging baskets and other plantings to the area. They would like to see an internet café in the strip mall on College Avenue, especially if the proposed whitewater park is developed and becomes an Olympic venue. They work extensively with their neighbors, including Haight Village, the Winnebago County Health Department, Haas Towing and Joseph Behr. A copy of ORCHiD's strategic plan is included here as Appendix A.
- ♦ **Rockford Housing Authority** will complete demolition of the 84 apartments in the Jane Addams development in 2007 pursuant to approval given by HUD in late 2006 to do so. They provided training for those ready to go; hired a case manager to work with residents on an individual basis; and will keep track of them after they move out. They hope to have most residents relocated by July of this year, but also want to minimize the time buildings are vacant, so demolition will follow fairly quickly after the last resident moves out. The area south of College Avenue will be done first to allow for new approaches to the Morgan Street bridge. The current plan for the area north of College is to use it as green space. They have met with the Park District to discuss this. They plan to transition Brewington Oaks back to what it was originally designed for, apartments for elderly and disabled, after remodeling and enlarging apartments as funding allows.

- ♦ **Joseph Behr** employs about 150 people at this location; this may go up some but will definitely not go down. The company's home office is here but they also operate in Iowa and Indiana. They will relocate their main entrance to Kishwaukee Street when the street itself is done. This will allow for two lanes in and two lanes out, and will get their trucks off Seminary Street. They have already acquired most of the property they need to do this.

Behr is also working with the Park District and others on the Keith Creek Greenway. As part of this, Nelson Park will be improved and a pathway extended from 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue Park westward.

## What the Residents Told Us – Survey Results

---

The City mailed survey forms to all property owners within the Focus Area in January 2007. Unfortunately, there was no practical way to make the same mailing to all residents, so the results are skewed by the fact that all but 4 of the 33 survey forms returned were from owners. With this stipulation in mind, the surveys provided the following input:

- ♦ Just over half – 55% – have lived in the area for 10 years or less. Nearly a third (30%) have lived here for 5 years or less. At the other end of the spectrum, 21% of respondents said they have lived in the neighborhood for at least 20 years.
- ♦ The most common reasons for moving into the neighborhood were affordability, the historical homes, and having grown up here.
- ♦ When asked to rate the neighborhood on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the worst and 10 the best, the average score was 2.72. The highest rating anyone gave was a single 8, followed by a single 6. Six people gave it a 5.
- ♦ When asked to rank certain neighborhood characteristics, the area received an overwhelmingly “poor” rating in terms of neighborhood image (79%) with about 2/3 giving a “poor” rating for safety, places to shop and places to eat out. The neighborhood scored well in terms of open space and parks, and for opportunities to be involved in the neighborhood. Opinions were fairly well divided on the question of overall quality of life.
- ♦ We got the following results when we asked people to rank whether certain improvements would help the neighborhood a lot, a little or not at all:
  - ♦ Fewer vacant, dilapidated and boarded up houses – 82% said a lot.
  - ♦ Reduce crime against people and property – 82% said a lot.
  - ♦ Better sidewalks – 73%, a lot.
  - ♦ More financial assistance for home renovation – 70%, a lot.
  - ♦ Landscaping along Kishwaukee Street – 67%, a lot.
  - ♦ Improved property maintenance – 64%, a lot.
- ♦ When asked to rate public services in the neighborhood, only sidewalks and streets were given a “poor” rating by a majority of respondents. Those receiving the most “excellent” ratings were garbage collection (46%), fire protection (36%) and ambulance service (33%).

- On the issue of crime and safety, all but one respondent said they had actually seen drug dealing in the neighborhood. Only one of the categories listed on the survey form – robbery by force – showed less than a majority having seen such a thing happen. Others ranged from 85% having witnesses a home being broken into or vandalized to 58% for teen drinking or drug use.

## Issues and Assets

Task Force members and neighborhood residents attending the December 2006 meeting of the College/ Seminary Focus Area Task Force assembled an extensive list of **assets** in the neighborhood. Some relate to specific locations, some are generalized, and a few lie outside the boundaries of the neighborhood but have an impact on it. As can be seen from the extensive list that was compiled, the neighborhood has some real strengths on which to build its future.

- Amenities** – the Rock River, historic properties and the history of the neighborhood, Nelson Park, being within walking distance of downtown.
- Residents** – ORCHiD, diverse population, HOME Board, participation in Weed & Seed.
- Institutions and services** – Rockford School District administration building, Kishwaukee School, Winnebago County Health Department, community policing, and RMTD bus routes.
- Businesses** – Joseph Behr & Sons, Haas Towing, Rockford Auto Parks, and College Avenue retail.
- Just outside the neighborhood** – Patriot Gateway Center, Barber-Colman, and The Salvation Army.
- Planned improvements/changes** – Morgan Street bridge project, Ingersoll/Watch Factory site (possible Whitewater Park), junior golf course, Riverwalk, possible Metra service, replacing Jane Addams development with a park, and returning Brewington Oaks to its original purpose.

Task Force members and residents completed a similar exercise in determining what **issues** face the neighborhood. These were broken down as follows:

- Public improvements** – condition of the streets, sidewalks, curbs and gutters;



drainage at Kishwaukee School; lighting. Specific problem: blind spot at Seminary and Baker Streets.

- ♦ **Crime** – prostitution and drugs.
- ♦ **New businesses needed** – restaurants, especially along the Riverwalk; locally owned (non-franchise) restaurants; ice cream shop; internet café; and a safe convenience store.
- ♦ **Community and kids' places** – community center/community garden, air conditioning at Kishwaukee School to allow for summer programs there, safe place for kids to play, and Park District events at Nelson Park.
- ♦ **Housing** – continue existing City programs for owner-occupied home, create a similar program for investor owners, and deal with board ups in the area.

## Goals

---

Working from all of the information shown above, the Task Force compiled a set of goals for the next five years, with specific objectives for each one. These are predicated on the assumption that the RHA will be successful in the planned demolition of the Jane Addams development in mid-2007, and that the City will move ahead with plans to build a new Morgan Street bridge, although an exact completion date is not known for that as yet.

The most significant problems in the neighborhood include the very low rate of home ownership, a high crime rate, the condition and/or appearance of some of the housing in the area, and the poor condition of some parts of the public infrastructure. To begin to resolve these problems, the Task Force proposes to meet the following goals in the next five years:

1. Upgrade public improvements, including all elements found in the public right-of-way – the street itself, curbs, gutters, storm drainage, lighting, and sidewalks.
2. Improve safety and security for all residents.
3. Bring new retail businesses to the neighborhood.
4. Establish a community center and community garden.
5. Make the neighborhood a safe place for kids.
6. Encourage increased investor or owner-occupied investment in neighborhood properties.
7. Improve the exterior appearance of College/Seminary properties.
8. Redevelop the Ingersoll site and adjacent industrial areas as a whitewater park and/or mixed use development.

The specific steps to be taken to achieve these goals are outlined in the attached table of Action Steps. These include programs and tasks to be carried out by the City of Rockford, the Rockford Housing Authority, the Rockford Park District, the Rockford School District, and, most importantly, the residents, property owners and business owners of the College/Seminary neighborhood.

## **Plan Implementation & Monitoring**

---

Preparing a plan is one thing; ensuring its implementation is something else altogether. While the City of Rockford took the lead in having this plan prepared, its implementation will depend on much more than City actions. With that in mind, the following steps will be taken to ensure continued implementation of this plan to the fullest extent possible.

- ♦ As a first step, this plan for the College/Seminary Focus Area will be adopted by the governing boards of all organizations represented on the College/Seminary Focus Area Task Force. In addition to the City of Rockford, these are the Rockford Housing Authority, Rockford Park District, Rockford School District, and ORCHiD. As part of this process, the City will also adopt this plan as an amendment to the 2020 Plan, Rockford's comprehensive plan.
- ♦ City staff will prepare a progress report at the end of each year (to be completed by January 31<sup>st</sup> of the following year) showing what has been accomplished by that point. For this to work, the City will need to rely on all of the organizations involved in implementation of this plan to get them information in a timely manner. To expedite this process, the City will prepare a simple update form to be distributed to designated contact people within each organization. Each organization will then send the completed forms back to the City in digital form.
- ♦ If there is agreement that the plan needs to be changed, the City will reconvene the Task Force for that purpose.
- ♦ At the end of the five-year plan period, the City – again with input from all other groups – will prepare a final report showing what has been accomplished and what remains to be done, with suggestions on how to carry out those projects that were not completed.

## **College/Seminary Focus Area Task Force 2006-2007**

### **City of Rockford**

- Alderman Douglas Mark, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward
- Alderman Victory Bell, 5<sup>th</sup> Ward
- Reid Montgomery, Director of Community and Economic Development

### **Area Organizations**

- Becky Lichty, President, ORCHiD
- Joe Owen, Vice President, ORCHiD
- Steve Anderson, Executive Director, Rockford Housing Authority
- Lee Foecking, Joseph Behr & Sons
- Jim Johnson, River District Association
- Al Gagliano, Rockford School District
- Laurie Anderson, Rockford Park District
- Sheila Kloster, Winnebago County Health Department